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Northeastern University

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Faculty Senate

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Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes : 10/20/2010

Stephen W. McKnight
Northeastern University

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Northeastern University
Office of the Faculty Senate

TO: FACULTY SENATE
FROM: STEPHEN W. MCKNIGHT, SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE
RE: MINUTES, 2010-2011 FACULTY SENATE, 20 OCTOBER 2010

Present: (Professors) Alper, Alshawabkeh, Basagni, Board, Bruns, Chilvers, Gaffney, Hafner, Hanson, Herman, Karma, Kruger, Lifter, McKnight, Morrison, Poriss, Portz, Ramirez, Sherman, Strauss, Suciu, Thrush, Waszczak, Zaremba

(Administrators) Director, Falcon, Finkelstein, Loeffelholz, Moore, Powers-Lee, Spieler, Yener, Zoloth

Absent (Professors) Adams, Barberis, Fox, Lane, Muftu, Sherwood,

(Administrators) Dean Van Den Abbeele

Provost Director convened the meeting at 11:47 AM

I. The minutes of 6 October were approved as written.

II. Senate Agenda Committee report. Professor Kruger reported that SAC has met twice in regular session and once with Provost Director. Professor Kruger met once with the Provost since the last Senate meeting.

SAC has approved the apportionment of faculty to serve on the Graduate Council for one year as suggested by Vice Provost Falcon in view of the new Colleges. Elections for the Council are underway. A committee was charged last year with reviewing and making recommendations concerning the Council Bylaws and will submit a final report this spring.

The following committees have been staffed and charged. A full transcript of the charges may be found on the Faculty Senate website.

Senate Standing Committee for Academic Policy

Members:

Professor Phyllis R. Strauss (Chair), COS-Biology
Professor Brendon Bannister, CBA-Management & Organizational Development
Provost Stephen W. Director
Professor Joan Fitzgerald, Law Policy & Society Program
Professor Terrence J. Gaffney, COS-Mathematics
Professor Albert Sacco Jr., COE-Chemical Engineering

Charge:

1. Review the long-range plan and assess the content of the plan with respect to evaluating the success of the University in meeting the goals of the Academic Plan, and in supporting the teaching and research missions of the University;

2. Make periodic recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the plan in meeting its goals;

3. Prepare a report on the process used to develop the long-range plan and the Committee's assessment of the content of the Plan. The report should contain recommendations and possible Senate resolutions for SAC's consideration and be submitted no later than 4 March 2011.

Senate Standing Committee for Faculty Development

Members:

Professor Emanuela Barberis (Chair), Physics-COS
Professor Akram Alshawbkeh, Civil & Environmental Engineering-COE
Professor Thomas K. Nakayama, Communication Studies-CAMD
Professor William Sanchez, Counseling & Applied Psychology-BCHS
Professor Wallace W. Sherwood, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice-CSSH

Charge:

The Senate Agenda Committee respectfully requests the 2010-2011 Faculty Development Committee address the following charges:

1. Tenure Policies and Procedures
   a. The Committee shall review the role of the Provost's tenure advisory committee and university-wide guidelines—such as the deans' procedures for the selection of external referees—issued by the Provost's Office to determine if any of the changes involve substantive additions or alterations of the tenure process and therefore warrant consideration by the Senate;

   b. Submit a written report on the Committee's findings with recommendations and possible draft resolutions by no later than December 10th, 2010.

2. Diversity of Faculty
   a. Review the University's relative success in recruiting and retaining faculty from diverse backgrounds;

   b. Review the University's relative success in placing faculty from diverse backgrounds in administrative positions;

   c. Submit a written report on the Committee's findings with recommendations and possible draft resolutions no later than April 1, 2010.

Professor Kruger also extended thanks to the Vice Provost Loeffelholz for a recent email regarding the college review process. The Office of the Faculty Senate will be pleased to receive confidential comments regarding the issue at facultysenate@neu.edu

And finally, Professor Kruger, having been asked by a number of faculty members, reported that the reason for his five-minute speech at Town Hall Meeting was that he was told by the President's Office that he was allotted five minutes.

III. Provost's Report. The Provost had no report.

IV. Primer for Roberts Rules

Professor Peterfreund noted that Robert's Rules were named for Henry Martyn Robert who devised the procedural method after being asked to preside over a church meeting in 1863 and

finding he did not know how to preside. They are modeled loosely on the rules of the US House of Representatives but are distinguished by the rules of the body which, in this case, are governed by the Senate Bylaws. Thus, Robert's Rules are important but are not the final words in terms of what empowers Northeastern's Faculty Senate.

On privileged motions, a point of personal privilege is a motion made in response to an offending remark and takes precedence. They also encompass those times when the leader of the body may wish to amend or suspend the orders of the day (the agenda).

Motions that bring business to the assembly are the main motions and are spelled out in the agenda. A motion may be made from the floor but generally the body adheres to business stated on the agenda.

The Faculty Senate has two peculiarities: one is the so-called "friendly amendment" where an amendment may be handled informally; the second is that Robert's Rules does not specify when a paper ballot may be used, therefore upon the request of three members, there must be a vote by ballot and it is not debatable.

It is always in order to consult with the meeting chair on a point of order.

Professor Peterfreund responded to Professor Gaffney that a motion to postpone discussion to a time certain may be made at any time and is debatable.

VI. Dual/combined majors

Vice Provost Powers-Lee reported that the Northeastern "Dual" or "Combined" major is a unique curricular innovation at Northeastern. Most universities have only "double majors" that combine all the requirements of both major. Last spring the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UUCC) renamed the "dual major" as "combined major" to more effectively distinguish them from double majors as that term is commonly used at other institutions. The UUCC articulated both the meaning and the process for the combined major. There are no changes to the curriculum requirements or the review process; nor are there changes to the sixty-two existing combined majors. A new category of "student-requested combined majors" was created.

Professor Kruger added that Vice Provost Powers-Lee and the Senate Agenda Committee had engaged in discussion over the summer about two concerns: the process whereby plans to implement the change without consulting with SAC had begun; and unit approval of the combined majors. SAC felt strongly that as departments have the responsibility for maintaining academic integrity, they should retain their part of the process. Vice Provost Powers-Lee agreed: the process that was adopted included department approval by both the department advisors and by the department chair. In addition, approval by the college is required.

Provost Director added that highly talented incoming students are interested in combined majors and Northeastern wishes to continue to attract high-performing students.

Professor Herman noted that NU also offers an independent major where students select from two or more departments and design curricula with faculty input. This allows students to work beyond the dual major. He suggested that the process for approval by two Colleges, however, is cumbersome and that UUCC should consider a single college-level matrix. He also

expressed concern about lack of interaction between departments when students choose to use templates which could bypass the capstone experience.

A matrix of existing combined majors was provided by the Vice Provost including established programs which span two departments but were not necessarily listed as combined majors in the past. She will attempt to provide data from other universities and will also ask UUCC to consider allowing freshman to declare a combined major upon entering.

Several Senators noted the across-the-board selection of combined majors and Professor Herman reported that several interdisciplinary programs began with students' interest in dual majors.

Vice Provost Powers-Lee also discussed independent majors which are a combination of more than two majors. The approval process for independent majors has been carried over from that used by the former College of Arts & Sciences and requires faculty from the participating departments to oversee and approve the independent major.

VII. Professor McKnight read the following motion and it was seconded:

Research Policy Oversight Committee *Resolution #1*

***WHEREAS* reducing or eliminating the Indirect Cost returned to principal investigators could impact research productivity,**

***BE IT RESOLVED* that the specific allocation for Indirect Cost Return to the principal investigator be determined at the time of submission of the grant.**

***BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED* that the specific allocation for newly generated Indirect Cost Return be placed into lapsing accounts with a fixed expiration date of two years. Funds in existing Indirect Cost Return accounts will not be affected.**

Professor McKnight yielded the floor to Professor Jones, chair of the 2009-2010 Senate Committee for Research Policy Oversight who stated that the Committee's principle drivers were RCM and the reorganization of NU's research infrastructure (i.e., the newly formed Office of Research Administration and Finance, or RAF). Specific areas of concern were indirect costs (IDC) and the issue of funds returning to colleges under the hybrid/RCM financial management system, specifically how to incentivize principal investigators when the decision is placed with the deans. The current practice of automatically returning 10% of the indirect costs may not be carried over in the hybrid/RCM model and the systems need some definition.

Another area of concern was the faculty incentive program which provided use of IDC for the enhancement of principal investigator's (PI) salaries and which was eliminated last year. In addition, questions have arisen concerning how to manage institutes and centers relying on IDC and how to harmonize issues on collaborative grants across colleges when each college has different policies about IDC.

Referring to "Recommendations from the Committee" on page two of the RPOC report, Professor Gaffney inquired why a fixed percentage for IDC return was not suggested and why a lapsing account for IDC return was suggested. Professor Jones responded that the two-year

window is a compromise recommendation and ultimately the percentage of IDC returned to the PI's is a decision made by deans under RCM as their vantage point concerns the entire college.

Professor Waszczak suggested that non-lapsing accounts would be benign and questioned why, if the decision resides with the deans to regulate the flow of funds, the Senate is being asked to mandate lapsing accounts. Professor Jones responded that RPOC undertook to suggest guidelines, to be administered through RAF, across all colleges. On the issue of lapsing or non-lapsing accounts, an attempt was made to address those instances where large accounts have amassed and have been idle.

Senators debated how long funds should be available after a grant is discontinued. Professor Hafner proposed an amendment to resolution #1(b) as follows:

> BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the specific allocation for newly generated indirect cost return be placed into lapsing account with a fixed expiration date of *four years after the end of the grant*.

The amendment was seconded.

Professor Strauss noted that the amount of funds that accrue in the overhead return accounts in most cases will not be large, and raised concern that any time limit would adversely affect those grants where monies are not received on a timely basis.

The floor was then yielded to Vice Provost for Research Bernstein who reported that at the national level much discussion has ensued concerning the proper use of indirect cost accounts and the total amount of indirect costs allowed by government to universities. The latter number has fluctuated and there are currently a number of congressmen who believe that government is paying too much, and monies are not being spent according to the original grant proposals. The Vice Provost expressed willingness to address the body concerning these issues.

Professor Karma noted that the originally proposed legislation penalizes the majority of PIs who do not amass large accounts and supports the resolution.

Several Senators spoke against any expiration date on the grounds that it could be a disincentive and did not provide enough flexibility. Vice Provost Bernstein noted that there should be a spirit of understanding that the funds are for research and that faculty cannot spend without guidelines.

Dean Luzzi suggested the focus be redirected from the individual investigator to the larger view as every year that a college carries a balance on its books in unspent accounts is a year when monies allocated for research are not being spent to forward the overall university research.

The question was called but the motion for cloture did not receive a two-thirds majority; the amended resolution #1(b) remained in debate.

Professor Gaffney offered a friendly amendment to add the option of negotiating a waiver with the dean of the college in which the PI resides to extend the overhead return account beyond the four-year expiration date. Professor Hafner accepted.

Dean Finkelstein spoke to the broader perspective where the hybrid RCM model will place fixed costs at the College level which must be addressed. In addition, the Colleges may need to find

support for research by faculty members who have lost grants. Researchers who do not have IDC return accounts may need support..

Brief discussion was held concerning when a grant ends, the national discussion on the appropriateness of rates, and whether actual costs are covered. The Provost noted that overhead is based on real institutional costs, and if it is used for other purposes, the government could be justified in reducing the overhead rate. Vice Provost Bernstein pointed out that the overhead return could be called "cost sharing" and considered an expenditure of university discretionary funds to support research.

The question was called and objection was made. VOTE for cloture: 20-9-1.

The amended resolution #1(b) is as follows:

> BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the specific allocation for newly generated indirect cost return be placed into lapsing account with a fixed expiration date of *four years after the end of the grant or upon a date negotiated with the Dean of the College in which the principal investigator resides.*

VOTE to accept amendments to the second paragraph of resolution #1: PASSED, 17-11-3

Professor Gaffney recommended an amendment to resolution #1(a) as follows:

> BE IT RESOLVED that the specific allocation for indirect costs return to the principal investigator be *fixed at 10% of the indirect cost.*

This was seconded. Professor Gaffney suggested that negotiating the rate of overhead return at the time of submitting the proposal should not be an obstacle for the PI.

Dean Luzzi, noting the many ambiguities existing, moved to postpone further discussion to a time certain: after the Vice Provost for Research has made a presentation the Senate on grant portfolios, types of grants, size and use of indirect costs, how to effectively incentivize PI's, and other matters discussed today. The motion was seconded and several Senators spoke in favor noting too that it was not clear that University-wide policies are needed.

The question was called and, there being no objections, a vote ensued.

VOTE to postpone further discussion on the resolutions concerning research policy until such time as Vice Provost Bernstein addresses the Senate on the current status and best practices of sponsored research; PASSED, 31-0-0

The Senate adjourned at 1:17 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen W. McKnight, Secretary
Faculty Senate